

VLR-2/17/76
NHRP-10/21/76

file copy

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICENATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC Pitts Neck (Preferred)

AND/OR COMMON

Pitts Neck Farm

2 LOCATION On Pitts Neck, approximately 6 miles west of New Church; .3 mile south-east of Pocomoke River; west end of State Route 709, 800 feet south intersection of State Routes 709 and 804; .9 mile southwest of intersection of State Routes 709 and 701.

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

New Church

☒ VICINITY OF

First (Thomas N. Downing)

STATE

Virginia

CODE
51

COUNTY

Accomack

CODE

001

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

☐ DISTRICT☒ BUILDING(S)☐ STRUCTURE☐ SITE☐ OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

☐ PUBLIC☒ PRIVATE☐ BOTH

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

☐ IN PROCESS☐ BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

☒ OCCUPIED☐ UNOCCUPIED☐ WORK IN PROGRESS

ACCESSIBLE

☐ YES: RESTRICTED☐ YES: UNRESTRICTED☒ NO

PRESENT USE

☒ AGRICULTURE☐ COMMERCIAL☐ EDUCATIONAL☐ ENTERTAINMENT☐ GOVERNMENT☐ INDUSTRIAL☐ MILITARY☐ MUSEUM☐ PARK☒ PRIVATE RESIDENCE☐ RELIGIOUS☐ SCIENTIFIC☐ TRANSPORTATION☐ OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Mr. Harry F. Bell, Sr.

STREET & NUMBER

New Owner: 3/28/75

Mr. & Mrs. James E. Bell
RFD #1, Box 174
Pocomoke City, MD 21851

CITY, TOWN

New Church

VICINITY OF

STATE

Virginia 23415-

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Accomack County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Accomack

STATE

Virginia

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS (2) (See continuation sheet #1)

TITLE

(1) Historic American Buildings Survey

DATE

1940

☒ FEDERAL ☐ STATE ☐ COUNTY ☐ LOCALDEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

Library of Congress

CITY, TOWN

Washington

STATE

D. C.

DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		DATE _____

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Pitts Neck, on the Eastern Shore of Virginia, lies amidst the flat, open farmlands of Accomack County, near the confluence of the Pocomoke River with the Chesapeake Bay. The dwelling house, the only surviving early building on the farm, consists of two principal sections--a single-cell, story-and-a-half frame structure and a large, two-story brick block (now painted light green) which is somewhat newer. The two were connected by a frame hyphen which was enlarged in recent years to extend to the depth of the main block and continue as a lean-to across the east side of the smaller wing.

The two-bay wing, probably built around the beginning of the eighteenth century, sits on a brick basement and has a foot-thick, Flemish-bond brick gable end with a stepped water table, a two-course belt course at eaves level, and a crowning T-shaped chimney stack. A cellar door with a segmental head is the only opening in this end wall. On the east wall, now sheltered by the modern lean-to, is the former exterior door. The steeply pitched gable roof is covered with asphalt shingles. Modern asbestos shingles sheath the sides, and the early-nineteenth-century, six-over-six sashes are flanked by modern louvered metal blinds, as are all of the other windows of the house.

The interior of this early wing has been heavily altered. Its walls are now entirely covered with modern strip paneling, which conceals the fireplace and gable end stairs and consequently prevents access to the loft.

The two-story main block is about 25 to 30 years younger than its wing. Five bays on the front (west) and four on the rear, it is built of brick laid in Flemish bond above and below the beveled water table, with glazed headers once visible above it. In addition, a rubbed-brick belt course is carried around the house at second-floor level, and putlog holes remain in the rear wall. All of the windows have rubbed-brick jack arches and modern nine-over-nine sash except for the southern first-floor window on the rear facade, which has twelve-over-six sash. This window with its poorly constructed jack arch, bears evidence of having been created or enlarged early in the nineteenth century. The decorative highlight of the exterior is the front doorway. Broad, plain pilasters support a shallow pediment of molded brick. The whole frames a wide, flat surround with a jack arch distinguished by a scrolled soffit, one of only two examples of that treatment known to survive in Virginia. The main block is surmounted by a shallow gable roof, which formerly had a modillion cornice, and by two interior end chimneys with houndstooth necking suggesting that they were rebuilt early in the nineteenth century.

The plan of the main block consists of a central passage dividing a single large northern parlor from two southern rooms with corner fireplaces and unequal dimensions. It has been altered slightly, but the original arrangement is clear. The present stair, an early nineteenth-century feature with a square newel and balusters, rises in the passage. This is not its original location, as is indicated by the full-height raised paneling, with its elaborate asymmetrical chair rail and heavy molded cornice, which sheaths the passage. The panels do not break at the stair treads, but pass behind them. Under the stair may be seen a closed doorway (retaining its original brown paint) into the small southeast room. It is clear that the stair once rose in the southeast room, which is undecorated. In the early nineteenth century, it was moved to the passage. This resulted in the door from the passage being closed and a new doorway being created from the southwest room into the old stair hall. It was at that time that a fireplace was probably built in the southeast room, the stacks reworked, and a window created to light the room which had previously been lit from the upper level.

(See continuation sheet #2)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

CONTINUATION SHEET

2

ITEM NUMBER 7

PAGE 1

In the southwest room, the corner fireplace is decorated by an elaborate chimney breast consisting, over the firebox, of three tall raised panels over a single horizontal one. Part of the architrave surround was cut out and a Georgian Revival mantel was inserted late in the nineteenth century. To the left of the firebox, two extremely tall and attenuated raised panels extend down to the asymmetrical chair rail. Raised-panel wainscoting is carried around the other walls of the room. The window reveals are paneled, and there is, in addition, a single panel under each window opening.

Unfortunately, the largest and reputedly the finest room at Pitts Neck, the north parlor, was stripped of its woodwork by an antique dealer in 1923. The end windows of that room were blocked by bookcases in the nineteenth century, and these are also gone.

DTU

SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD		AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)	
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION			

SPECIFIC DATES

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Pitts Neck dwelling house in Accomack County survives as a particularly distinctive example of a Virginia plantation house of the early eighteenth century. Chief among the features contributing to its architectural interest is the scrolled soffit of its molded brick doorway. This type of decorative device was widely used in England, but examples are exceedingly rare in America. That on Pitts Neck is one of only two known to have survived in Virginia. The doorway, along with other brickwork details, fine interior paneling, and an earlier wing with a T-shaped chimney combine to make Pitts Neck an important architectural document. Its several alterations have not significantly diluted the building's integrity as a landmark.

Now isolated, Pitts Neck plantation was once a scene of bustling activity. A tobacco warehouse was operated by the Pitt family in the early eighteenth century at a landing on the Pocomoke River, within sight of the present house. As late as 1924, the Chesapeake Bay steamer regularly stopped at the river landing.

The 3,000-acre tract which includes the present Pitts Neck Farm was first granted to Robert Pitt II (d. 1670) in 1663, partially as headrights for the transportation of twenty persons to Virginia. It remained in the family for 170 years; among its Pitt owners were Robert IV (d. 1756), who probably built the main part of the present house, and his son John Pitt II (d. 1779), a surgeon in the revolutionary Virginia State Navy. Ann Pitt Beard Hall finally sold the then 170-acre plantation in 1834 to Thomas H. Joynes.

Joynes conveyed the house to Thomas W. Hargis in 1852, and sixteen years later, Hargis' executors sold it to James H. Fletcher. Fletcher's daughter, Julia W. Fletcher, who inherited the property in 1896, sold it to Seth E. Bell, a tenant in the house, in 1902. Bell left it to the present owner, his son Harry F. Bell, in 1925. Mr. Bell has been living in the house at Pitts Neck since 1890.

DTU

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Whitelaw, Ralph T. Virginia's Eastern Shore, Vol. II. Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, Inc., 1968. (originally published Richmond, Va., 1951).
Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission Files.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 170 acres

UTM REFERENCES

A 1,8 445110 4202980
ZONE EASTING NORTHING
C 1,8 444320 4201730

B 1,8 445100 4201720
ZONE EASTING NORTHING
D 1,8 444330 4202990

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION The Pitts Neck property is bounded by a line beginning at a at the intersection of the western end of Route 804 and the eastern bank of the Pokomoke River; thence extending 1400' southeastward along south side of said route to its intersection with Route 709; thence extending 900' eastward along south side of Route 709; thence extending 3200' south along western edge of marsh; thence extending 1300' westward along north bank of Bullbagger Creek; thence extending 3500' northwestward partially following treelines; thence extending northward along east bank of creek and following shoreline to point of origin. The 170 acres being nominated represent the remaining portion of the original 3,000-acre tract.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME/TITLE

Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission Staff

ORGANIZATION

Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission

STREET & NUMBER

221 Governor Street

CITY OR TOWN

Richmond

DATE

January 1976

TELEPHONE

804-786-3144

STATE

Virginia

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE X

LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

TITLE Junius R. Fishburne, Jr., Executive Director
Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission

DATE FEB 17 1976
Virginia Landmarks Register

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION
ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

CONTINUATION SHEET

#1

ITEM NUMBER 6

PAGE 1

REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

- (2) Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission Survey
1967, 1968, 1972, 1975 State
Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission
221 Governor Street
Richmond, Virginia

USGS 7.5' quadrangle (scale:1:24000)
Saxis, Va./Md. 1968

PITTS NECK, ACCOMACK COUNTY
UTM References:

A-18/445110/4202980

B-18/445100/4201720

C-18/444320/4201730

D-18/444330/4202990

